

April 19, 2001

To: NITC Commissioners

From: Anne Byers

Subject: Community Technology Fund 2001

This year we received 28 eligible applications for the Community Technology Fund, requesting a total of \$697,569.78. We were please with both the variety of projects proposed and by the quality of the applications. With 225,659.60 available, it was clear that we would be able to fund only about a third of the requests.

Each eligible application was reviewed by three reviewers using a standard score sheet. The maximum score on the review scoring sheet is 60 points. The scores for each project were averaged to reach a composite score. The composite scores were then used to initially rank the projects. The Technical Panel approved the reviews of the applications at their April 10 meeting. The technical review scores for the applicants can be found on page 2.

The Community Council reviewed Community Technology Fund applications at their April 6 meeting. In their discussions, the Community Council indicated that as many projects as possible should be funded and that every effort should be made to ensure that all geographic areas of the state were represented in the awards made. In order to achieve these goals, the Council recommended that no application receive the full amount requested. The Council also indicated that projects which focused on economic and community development were their highest priority. The projects the Community Council recommended for funding and the recommended amounts of the awards are listed on page 3.

Summaries of the applications, in order of their technical review scores, begin on page 4.

Grants will be awarded to those projects approved at the April 25 NITC meeting.

# Community Technology Fund 2001

## Technical Review Scores

Score	Entity	Project	Amount
59	City of Aurora	Aurora Technology Business Incubator	\$25,000.00
55	Lower Platte North NRD	Creating a Common Framework for Integrating Surface Water Data	\$24,800.00
55	City of Humboldt Public Library	Taking Resources & Information Online (TRIO)	\$18,600.00
54	Southeast Community College	Technology-based Education for Health Occupations	\$18,195.00
53	Beatrice Public Library	Senior Connection	\$22,932.00
51	City of Grand Island	Interactive Community Informational Kiosk	\$25,000.00
51	Neb Commission for the Deaf	Telehealth	\$38,472.00
51	Omaha Tribe of Nebraska	Omaha Tribe Online Information Technology Plan	\$25,000.00
50	Village of Brainard	Brainard Community Technology Center	\$18,495.00
50	Kimball County Hospital Clinic	KHC Clinic Integrated Practice Management	\$57,500.00
48	Greeley Public Schools	Greeley Learning and Technology Center	\$25,000.00
48	City of Lincoln	City of Lincoln Technology Infrastructure Audit	\$25,000.00
48	Central Community College	From Plowshares to PCs: Creating a Learning Community	\$25,000.00
47	Homer Community School	Educating Through Mobile Technology	\$31,808.00
47	ESU 10	Cozad Center Technology Access	\$24,657.00
47	Dundy County Hospital	Creation and Implementation of an Enterprise Intranet	\$25,000.00
46	Scottsbluff Public Library	Internet Access for Children	\$5,529.80
45	Scribner Public Library	Scribner Community-Library Internet Project	\$9,079.08
45	City of Crete	Crete On-line	\$34,667.00
44	Valley County Ec. Dev. Board	Fiber Optic Learning Center	\$46,000.00
43	Hooper Public Library	Hooper Consolidated Library System	\$25,000.00
40	Lower Platte North NRD	The Technologically Empowered Elected Official	\$24,800.00
37	City of Nebraska City	Nebraska City Strategic Technology Plan	\$14,400.00
36	Nebraska Game and Parks Commission	Web Student/Volunteer Production Project	\$23,330.00
31	John A. Stahl Library--Westpoint	Technological Computer Lab	\$21,543.20
30	Central City Public Library	Community Computers	\$8,820.70
28	City of Superior	South Central Nebraska Technology Enhancement Project	\$24,941.00
27	McCool Junction Public School	McCool Junction Community Technology Connection	\$28,800.00
<b>TOTAL REQUESTED</b>			<b>\$697,369.78</b>
<b>Grant Funds Available</b>			<b>\$225,659.60</b>

# Community Technology Fund 2001

## Community Council Recommendations

Score	Entity	Project	Amount Requested	CC Recommendation
59	City of Aurora	Aurora Technology Business Incubator	\$25,000.00	\$ 23,240.00
55	City of Humboldt Public Library	Taking Resources & Information Online (TRIO)	\$18,600.00	\$ 17,290.00
54	Southeast Community College	Technology-based Education for Health Occupations	\$18,195.00	\$ 16,910.00
53	Beatrice Public Library	Senior Connection	\$22,932.00	\$ 21,310.00
51	Neb Commission for the Deaf	Telehealth	\$38,472.00	\$ 23,240.00
51	Omaha Tribe of Nebraska	Omaha Tribe Online Information Technology Plan	\$25,000.00	\$ 23,240.00
50	Village of Brainard	Brainard Community Technology Center	\$18,495.00	\$ 17,185.00
50	Kimball County Hospital Clinic	KHC Clinic Integrated Practice Management	\$57,500.00	\$ 23,240.00
48	Greeley Public Schools	Greeley Learning and Technology Center	\$25,000.00	\$ 20,000.00
48	City of Lincoln	City of Lincoln Technology Infrastructure Audit	\$25,000.00	\$ 20,000.00
48	Central Community College	From Plowshares to PCs: Creating a Learning Community	\$25,000.00	\$ 20,000.00
<b>Total</b>				<b>\$ 225,655.00</b>
<b>Grant Funds Available</b>				<b>\$ 225,659.60</b>

## **Review Summaries**

**Project:** Aurora Technology Business Incubator

**Applicant:** City of Aurora

**Funds Requested:** \$25,000

**Score:** 59

### **Executive Summary:**

The Aurora Technology Business Incubator (ATBI) is a project of Hamilton County Information Technology, Inc. a non-profit organization which serves as a catalyst in the development of information technology capacity and uses in our community. The desire to encourage local IT business development, entrepreneurship, and expanded IT services led to the creation of the ATBI project.

ATBI will provide services, office space, consultation and education for local businesses who qualify and apply for our incubator program. ATBI will create an ideal environment for these IT professionals as well as the telecommunications infrastructure and support they need to be successful in their new or expanded business endeavors. The NITC portion of this project will ensure that ATBI has the proper IT equipment and access for all participants and the appropriate management team to initiate this program effectively. The equipment includes a fully equipped central office, building infrastructure and telecommunications capacity. This grant will also provide for contracted part-time management and development of ATBI until it can be self-funded.

### **Staff and Reviewer Comments:**

The project is very well conceived and supported. It fits within a local comprehensive technology plan that receives considerable attention. In a very real sense, this is a pilot project for rural Nebraska. It will demonstrate whether this kind of local economic development strategy, when targeted and well managed, can be successful in smaller communities.

### **Community Council Comments:**

The Community Council recommends funding this project. However, in order to fund more projects, the Community Council recommends reducing the award to \$23,400.

**Project:** Creating a Common Framework for Integrating Surface Water Data  
**Applicant:** Lower Platte North Natural Resources District  
**Funds Requested:** \$24,800  
**Score:** 55

**Executive Summary:**

This project will develop a standardized, surface water features database (map), to facilitate the collection and integration of data and public policies of multiple state, local, and federal agencies that make or implement public policies related to Nebraska's surface water. Specifically, this project will develop a digital, (1:24,000-scale) geospatial database (map), with associated attributes, for the surface water features in the Salt Creek Watershed in eastern Nebraska (Lancaster/Saunders County). This geospatial database will be based on a model, which has been endorsed by the Nebraska GIS Steering Committee and which was specifically designed to provide a common reference, surface water database to facilitate multipurpose use and inter-agency collaboration.

The project will convert existing paper maps to digital geospatial format, update the stream locations from these 1950-60s vintage paper maps based on modern aerial photography, and provide standardized database identifiers for all surface water features. The project will facilitate the collaborative use of modern information technology, such as geographic information systems (GIS), in the important public policy area of surface water by developing a standardized database for this one geographic area. The project will make information more accessible to the general public by facilitating the use of information technology tools, such as GIS, to graphically display the implications of public policies and issues related to surface water. The project will be a collaborative effort undertaken by the Lower Platte North Natural Resources District, the Department of Natural Resources and the Conservation and Survey Division of the University of Nebraska.

**Staff and Reviewer Comments:**

This is a well thought out project which will give the Lower Platte North Natural Resources District a tool they need now and the State of Nebraska a pilot project which can be used to expand the data layer statewide as resources become available. This project encourages cooperation between agencies and provides needed data in a database that has been prioritized by the GIS Steering Committee.

**Community Council Comments:**

The Community Council recommends not funding this project. The Council felt that the grants should go toward community and economic development projects, not projects focusing on local government operations.

**Project:** Taking Resources & Information Online (TRIO)

**Applicant:** City of Humboldt Public Library

**Funds Requested:** \$18,600.00

**Score:** 55

**Executive Summary:**

The Bruun Memorial Public Library of Humboldt, the Humboldt Public School Library-Media Center, and the Table Rock-Steinauer School Library-Media Center have formed a consortium, TRIO (Taking Resources & Information Online), to simultaneously and collaboratively enhance access to library services. This TRIO of sites (three libraries representing three communities--Humboldt, Table Rock, and Steinauer) will serve a TRIO of customer groups: students; teachers; and patrons/public.

The Taking Resources & Information Online project will also enable a TRIO of activities for the three entities: the purchase and installation of adequate servers, the upgrade or conversion of library automation software, and the development of beneficial new networks of information.

Library doors leading to local materials and valuable information resources will be opened virtually 24 - hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week, through TRIO's plans to provide enhanced access via the Internet. TRIO is requesting \$18,600 from the Community Council of the Nebraska Information Technology Commission to assist this technology improvement project that will benefit southeastern Nebraska citizens.

**Staff and Reviewer Comments:**

This is a nicely done proposal, evidencing the time and thought put into the cooperative by the participating parties. The project team appears to have the right mix of experience and qualifications to be successful. The applicants show that they are able to confront obstacles (e.g.; the expense of mounting a Web-based catalog) and find creative solutions that keep them moving toward their original goals (e.g; finding a Web host for their database in order to make holdings available even though real-time status will be unavailable).

**Community Council Comments:**

The Community Council recommends funding this project. However, in order to fund more projects, the Community Council recommends reducing the award to \$17,290.

**Project:** Technology-Based Education for Health Occupation

**Applicant:** Southeast Community College

**Funds Requested:** \$18,195.00

**Score:** 54

**Executive Summary:**

The overall goal of the Technology-based Education for Health Occupations Project is to expand access to vocational education by use of technology. Southeast Community College (SCC) proposes to continue a collaboration with four hospitals in Kearney, Grand Island, Norfolk, and North Platte and three other community colleges, Central, Mid-Plains, and Northeast. The project will provide two distance health occupations associate degree programs to rural Nebraska by combining technology with campus and hospital classes/clinicals. Both Internet-based courses and two-way interactive television will be employed in the project. The project will serve as a model for the state and nation in the strengthening of rural health infrastructure through the use of technology and through shared responsibility for educational programming.

Within the context of this project, the NITC proposal will request the necessary computer hardware and software for faculty (1) to develop instructional materials for online use and (2) to facilitate communication with distance students. The proposed budget of \$18,195 will be used for laptop computers and classroom management software. The portable technology will have the speed and memory necessary for developing courses that take advantage of multimedia presentations. It will assure access and flexibility to faculty working at various sites. The portable technology will also enhance communication between students and teachers throughout the technology-based program. The software will enhance the management of enrollment, grading and competency tracking of the specialized health programs.

**Staff and Reviewer Comments:**

This is a well-written application. A strong match is provided by Southeast Community College and the partnering hospitals in Grand Island, Kearney, North Platte and Norfolk.

**Community Council Comments:**

The Community Council recommends funding this project. However, in order to fund more projects, the Community Council recommends reducing the award to \$16,910.

**Project:** Senior Connection

**Applicant:** Beatrice Public Library

**Funds Requested:** \$22,932.00

**Score:** 53

**Executive Summary:**

The “Senior Connection” is a coordinated effort by the Beatrice Public Library and Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging to provide efficient, easily accessible Internet service to the people in the Gage County area, particularly senior citizens. The “Senior Connection” is the final piece of the “Beatrice Connection” project of the mid-1990s that created 400 knowledgeable internet users in the community within a 6 month period through a cooperative Department of Commerce grant to the Beatrice Public Schools, Beatrice Public Library and Southeast Community College, all planned through the Beatrice Area Technology Committee. “Senior Connection” peer volunteers will provide an in-kind match of at least 405 hours to teach (or re-teach) 100 senior citizens how to use email. This will be followed by the opportunity to learn Internet search techniques taught one-on-one by the staff of the Beatrice Public Library. Southeast Community College is willing to further their knowledge through adult education opportunities developed specifically for interested senior citizens.

Eleven wireless computers (8 for the Public Library, 3 for the Senior Center) will be purchased along with other appropriate hardware and a laser printer for each location. The Beatrice Public Library will also purchase software and a scanner. The Beatrice Senior Center will install ADSL (already in use at the Public Library) to replace dial-up access. Since the newest public access computer owned by either the Library or Senior Center is five years old, this project is a priority for both organizations.

**Staff and Reviewer Comments:**

This is a well-written application. There is evidence of a strong partnership between the Senior Center and the Beatrice Public Library.

**Community Council Comments:**

The Community Council recommends funding this project. However, in order to fund more projects, the Community Council recommends reducing the award to \$21,310.



**Project:** Interactive Community Information Kiosk

**Applicant:** City of Grand Island

**Funds Requested:** \$25,000.00

**Score:** 51

**Executive Summary:**

This proposal is a request for funding to develop a public access, self-service, bilingual Kiosk, which dispenses information, services, and programs regarding municipal government in response to user input. The Kiosk will be designed to include Point-of-Information (POI), Point-of-Purchase (POP), and Internet capability. The Kiosk will be located in a northwest Grand Island retail outlet to provide convenient, coordinated, and centralized access to public information regarding the community and surrounding areas via computer. Grant funds will be used to design and purchase the Kiosk, to purchase, install and configure hardware and software, and to provide a power source and telephone line. Information will be available relative to City government, with links to other sites including: area communities, County, State and Federal entities, medical facilities, educational organizations, human service organizations, local business, and area attractions. Once implemented, the off-site computer will be connected to the City's web server and updated both remotely and simultaneously providing up-to-date information on a regular basis.

The primary purpose of the site is to provide an alternate location for residents and visitors to obtain information regarding local government, area services, facilities, businesses, organizations, and attractions. City Information Technology Plans for fiscal year 2000-2001 included the purchase of a server to be 100% responsible for the management of the information contained on the City's web site. As the web site is redeveloped over the course of the next six-(6) months, our ability to provide interactive, bilingual services, (application processes, City Code access, on-line payments, etc.) will be magnified. It is expected that the Kiosk will enable residents to conduct municipal government business in the evening and on weekends. For the resident, this equates accessibility to less travel time to City Hall, less standing in line, an increased ability to conduct research and business at the leisure of the user, and access to language specific information. For the City, the interactive Kiosk will substantially reduce the transaction costs of providing services. We will be able to connect to and integrate on-line data from multiple sources and provide statistical data such as location of police, fire, and ambulance services.

**Staff and Reviewer Comments:**

This is an innovative idea for improving access to local government information. The applicant has researched both community needs and the implementation local government kiosks in other cities.

**Community Council Comments:**

The Community Council recommends not funding this project. The Council felt that the grants should go toward community and economic development projects, not projects focusing on local government operations.

**Project:** Telehealth

**Applicant:** Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

**Funds Requested:** \$38,472,00

**Score:** 51

**Executive Summary:**

The Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing is establishing a video conferencing network (Telehealth) to provide access to higher quality video connections that allows for signing or interpreting at a distance throughout the state of Nebraska. This project will install an additional T1 circuit, operating video at 768 Kbps, to the western part of the state. An innovation grant allowed the Commission to plan and evaluate demonstrations and training using video technology to determine that using video conferencing systems was adequate for mental health services for deaf and hard of hearing people, which will expand services throughout Nebraska.

This project will allow for the expansion of the Telehealth system to Western Nebraska and the purchasing of additional bandwidth and equipment from Lincoln to the Panhandle area to support providing higher quality video. The videoconferencing system-PictureTel incorporates the latest techniques in digital signal processing to provide the highest quality video/audio to connect and display information from a users local area data network or laptop computer. The Commission will have a dedicated connection of the Commission's two facilities to the Nebraska Video Conference Network and the NEB SAT network.

**Staff and Reviewer Comments**

This project addresses a great unmet need in an innovative, but practical manner. There is evidence of much thought and research conducted on how to proceed. This project exemplifies how information technology can be utilized to bridge the barriers of both distance and disability. It appears that user fees and reductions in travel costs and consultant fees will offset line charges in the second year of the project. This project is complementary to LB 334 which authorizes the Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to establish a telehealth system to provide access for deaf and hard of hearing persons to mental health, alcoholism and drug abuse services.

The Community Technology Fund guidelines state that projects of exceptional merit will be considered for amounts of over \$25,000. Although a solid project, this project did not score in the top five. If the award was reduced to \$23,240 as the Community Council has recommended, the Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing has indicated that they would pursue other avenues of funding for the equipment and would be able to use the reduced award to cover first year line charges.

As this is an ongoing program, it may be more appropriate for this project to be funded through the appropriation process.

**Community Council Comments:**

The Community Council recommends funding this project. However, in order to fund more projects, the Community Council recommends reducing the award to \$23,240.00.

**Project:** Omaha Tribe Online Information Technology Plan

**Applicant:** Omaha Tribe of Nebraska

**Funds Requested:** \$25,000.00

**Score:** 51

**Executive Summary:**

The Omaha Tribe proposes to contract with a national Native American consulting firm to facilitate the development of an information technology plan that will outline comprehensive goals to be used to enhance governmental, social, and economic infrastructures.

The plan will recommend specific directions and alternatives that the Tribe can pursue in the future with regard to maximizing certain telecommunication resources that might be unique and advantageous. The following are examples:

- **Development of a Geographical Information System** – web-based site providing information on land management and environmental issues
- **Improved web-based delivery of tribal enrollment services and data management** – interconnectivity with eligible enrollees' applications
- **Telemedicine** – improvement of web-based health care with Indian Health Services and state-wide hospitals and medical facilities
- **Distance learning** – web-based classroom participation from local community colleges and state-wide universities
- **Procurement** – web-based purchasing from vendors
- **Tribal News** – news digest, calendar of events, bulletin board
- **Governmental information** – tribal council minutes, non-proprietary documents, program information, significant historical & cultural notes
- **Employment opportunities** – web-based job recruitment
- **Development of potential e-commerce enterprises** – web-based information services and product availability

The consulting firm will also provide information on grant funds available for program continuation expansion. The information technology plan will be consistent with goals established by the State of Nebraska's information technology plan.

Another feature of the IT plan will be an examination of current federal and state legislation offering advantages to the Tribe in the development of telecommunication projects, e.g., the Telecommunication Act of 1996 and the Broadband Internet Access Act of 2001, as well as LB 41, 89, 90, 463, and 827.

The consulting firm will recommend appropriate computer hardware and software and related peripherals, as well as personal costs required to establish and operate a web site program.

**Staff and Reviewer Comments:**

This project is an important first step for the Omaha Tribe.

**Community Council Comments:**

The Community Council recommends funding this project. However, in order to fund more projects, the Community Council recommends reducing the award to \$23,240.00.

**Project:** Brainard Community Technology Center

**Applicant:** Village of Brainard

**Funds Requested:** \$18,495.00

**Score:** 50

**Executive Summary:**

A "*Community Technology Center*" (CTC) will be developed. The CTC will:

- Provide opportunities for people to access a computer and gain knowledge and experience in word processing, data processing, e-mail and using the Internet.
- Train volunteers to staff and assist in the technology center.
- Provide opportunities for the Brainard Volunteer Fire Department to access information from State agencies and training material available on the Internet.
- Assist the Brainard Economic Development Council to develop promotional videos and to provide an instrument which will be utilized to collect data on industrial sites, housing opportunities and other related data. A brochure about the area will be prepared for new residents as a joint project of the Council and the Community Club.
- Develop a Brainard Web page in cooperation with East Butler High School. This Web page will include minutes of Village Board meetings, pictures and information on present businesses, available public housing, recreational opportunities, promotional material and data collected by the Brainard Economic Development Council.
- Publish a monthly newsletter featuring news stories, items of interest and public notices.
- Develop and make available historical videotapes of the Brainard, Nebraska area and other promotional material for Brainard's 125th Anniversary celebration in 2003

The applicant for this proposed project is the Village of Brainard, who will provide oversight of grant activities, space to house the computers and scheduled times for citizen access to the computers. Also participating in the project will be East Butler Public School, the Brainard Community Club, the Brainard Volunteer Fire Department, and the Brainard Economic Development Council.

The proposed project seeks funds to purchase equipment which will be utilized by the previously listed partners in this project. Funds will also be requested for consultants to advise in equipment setup, development of instruments for data processing and preparation of videos.

**Staff and Reviewer Comments:**

This proposal indicates strong partnerships within the community. The Village of Brainard submitted a proposal last year. They are resubmitting this year. It is evident that they took the suggestions of the reviewers to heart and have really improved their application.

**Community Council Comments:**

The Community Council recommends funding this project. However, in order to fund more projects, the Community Council recommends reducing the award to \$17,185.00.

**Project:** KCH Clinic Integrated Practice Management and Electronic Medical Record Project

**Applicant:** Kimball County Hospital Clinic

**Funds Requested:** \$57,500.00

**Score:** 50

**Executive Summary:**

This project will address many of the needs involved in providing health care in our rural community and serve as an example for other rural communities. Rural areas must harness the power of technology in order to survive. Patient frustration, lack of trained staff, recruitment and retention of quality health care providers, increasing federal regulations, lack of financial resources and employee turnover/job burnout are only some the challenges that exist today in rural health systems.

In order to move forward toward our vision of an integrated health-care delivery system in our area, we must first create our own, quality infrastructure. This includes our vision of an integrated practice management/electronic medical record system for our clinic, access to such from our hospital system, and eventually the ability to integrate with our regional hospital to facilitate a better patient experience. By automating many processes we can reduce and/or eliminate input errors, misplaced messages, and lost charts. We can also automate health maintenance reminders, increase times available for appointments, and reduce dictation and transcription costs. Compliance with federal regulations will also be enhanced by allowing us the ability to limit access to the patient record, assisting with coding, and will provide us with meaningful quality improvement data.

This project will also increase employee satisfaction as they will have more time available for the patient, rather than filing mountains of paper, searching for charts, calls to the pharmacy, etc. Our medical providers will have access to the Internet for continuing education courses, research, and patient education materials. Patient satisfaction should increase with reduced waiting times, streamlined operations, and happier staff. Financial outcomes should improve with the ability to file all claims electronically and additional patient visits.

We will be working with our regional hospital, Regional West Medical Center, and Kimball County Hospital to integrate this system with the existing systems in place.

**Staff and Reviewer Comments:**

Overall, this is a well-written application. The Community Technology Fund guidelines state that projects of exceptional merit will be considered for amounts of over \$25,000. Although a solid project, this project did not score in the top five.

**Community Council Comments:**

The Community Council recommends funding this project. However, in order to fund more projects, the Community Council recommends reducing the award to \$23,240.00.

**Project:** Greeley Learning and Technology Center

**Applicant:** Greeley Public Schools

**Funds Requested:** \$25,000.00

**Score:** 48

**Executive Summary:**

The establishment of the Greeley Learning & Technology Center provides the use of information technology in education, accessible life long learning opportunities, and economic development for the rural communities of Greeley County.

The primary goal of this project is to provide accessible, up-to-date resources, training and education to residents of Greeley County. This includes accessing the Internet, using distance learning equipment and taking college classes. This will be accomplished by collaboration between city and school to make existing school facilities available to the public by providing a one-stop learning center, equipped with computers, distance learning, periodicals, books and various interactive media resources. On-site information technology and business development classes will also be available to provide continuous learning opportunities for community members.

This project is the first phase of a long range plan which will include construction of a facility to expand the Greeley Public School Library and combine the city library into the Greeley Learning & Technology Center.

The Greeley Technology Task force is the initiator of the project. Their mission is “*to assist our community to take part in and become a partner with others to utilize technology as a tool to improve living standards and economic level of our citizens.*” Their focus includes:

- Enhance overall community education system.
- Improve cooperation between communities.
- Help to prepare the community for the future.
- Improve cooperation between governmental subdivisions such as city and public education.
- Assist in developing a library/technology center which combines city and public school support.

**Staff and Reviewer Comments:**

Apart from few components not fully addressed, this is a well-written proposal with evidence of community collaboration and support.

**Community Council Comments:**

The Community Council recommends funding this project. However, in order to fund more projects, the Community Council recommends reducing the award to \$20,00.00.

**Project:** City of Lincoln Technology Infrastructure Audit

**Applicant:** City of Lincoln, Finance Department

**Funds Requested:** \$25,000.00

**Score:** 48

**Executive Summary:**

The project will conduct a study examining the social and economic impact of existing technology infrastructure while determining current and future technology needs of the City of Lincoln and Lancaster County in relationship to the economic region.

Project Activities:

- 1) Conduct an assessment of present and potential businesses in Lincoln, knowledge and training, and technology providers.
- 2) Review other similar cities' technology infrastructure.
- 3) Assess strategies and supporting documentation to assist providers in justifying increased investment in Lincoln.
- 4) Develop an E-commerce strategy

**Staff and Reviewer Comments:**

The proposed study has strong support from stakeholders. A strong cash match is supplied. Some sections could have been addressed in more detail. For example, the application does not address other possible topics such as cooperation of utilities and access to their information regarding infrastructure or the cooperation of businesses regarding their telecommunications usage and needs. The goals, objectives, and deliverables should be more carefully defined. There does not appear to be any measurements for several of the project outcomes. How will the outcome of reduction of the digital divide be measured? How will a reduction of the costs of building, operating, and maintaining Lincoln's technology infrastructure be measured?

**Community Council Comments:**

The Community Council recommends funding this project. However, in order to fund more projects, the Community Council recommends reducing the award to \$23,240.00.

**Project:** From Plowshares to PCs: Creating a Learning Community in South Central Nebraska

**Applicant:** Central Community College

**Funds Requested:** \$25,000.00

**Score:** 48

**Executive Summary:**

This initiative will permit the Central Community College –Holdrege Center (CCC-HC) and the University of Nebraska (UNL) Cooperative Extension – Phelps/Gosper Counties to make available in rural communities a wide variety of information technology training programs that meet the needs of hospitals, agriculture, public safety, as well as manufacturers. To accomplish this task, the co-partners request funding to provide an instructor and nine laptop computers, fully equipped with current software applications, with the mobile capability to deliver informational technology training within Phelps, Gosper, Furnas, Harlan, Franklin, and Kearney Counties of south central Nebraska. Through academic planning, the partners will increase income efficiency, reduce cost, and unnecessary duplication by expanding collaborative instructional program offerings through the appropriate utilization of technology.

Over a five-year period the co-partners have been involved in numerous chamber of commerce meetings, and a variety of community task force work sessions, all of which have identified the need for access to quality information technology training that would begin to develop a skilled workforce within the region. The *Plowshares to PCs* partners recognize that to sustain their rural communities and remain economically viable they will need to raise the level of individual information technology skills to a competency commensurate with the leading technology of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Over a one-year period the partners envision developing the information technology skills of 75-125 individuals within the region. These individuals would create a new labor pool, upgrade the current workforce and support information based economic development. In addition individuals in transition (e.g. those seeking off farm income, single parents, senior citizens) would have newly acquired skills thus allowing them to compete in surrounding job markets.

**Staff and Reviewer Comments:**

Overall, this is a good proposal. Some of the questions could have been answered more thoroughly.

**Community Council Comments:**

The Community Council recommends funding this project. However, in order to fund more projects, the Community Council recommends reducing the award to \$23,240.00.



**Project:** Educating Through Mobile Technology

**Applicant:** Homer Community School

**Funds Requested:** \$31,808.00

**Score:** 47

**Executive Summary:**

Our intentions are to provide a portable computer lab consisting of 24 portable computers located on a portable cart that can be connected to the Internet via high speed wireless networking. Not only do we hope to reach the students of Homer Community School but also the adults of the community through adult education classes. We also will offer an open computer lab that will allow others who don't have high speed access to the Internet to have that access. Another aspect of our project is to allow access of the mobile lab to the HIWAY (Homer's Involvement With Adults and Youth) organization during the summer and after school to facilitate learning with the youth and adults in our community. Our project will also provide for the technical expertise needed to install and maintain this mobile technology.

**Staff and Reviewer Comments:**

Overall, this application is well planned and written. The proposal does lack detail and specificity in a few key areas. The timeline includes summer 2002 activities. Grants should be completed by June, 2002. If funded, the timeline will have to be adjusted or an extension granted.

**Project:** Cozad Center Technology Access

**Applicant:** Educational Service Unit 10

**Funds Requested:** \$24,941.00

**Score:** 47

**Executive Summary:**

Personnel at ESU 10 and at the Cozad Center are collaborating to solve the problem of unreliable Internet access currently experienced by the Cozad Center, Cozad Public Schools, and the Wilson Library in Cozad. With the existing connection, no effective way to manage the current system has been discovered. A wireless protocol will enable Educational Service Unit 10 to administer the network, to provide adequate and timely Internet browsing, and to collaborate in providing a filtering solution, especially important to protect young clients of the Wilson Library, Cozad Center, and Cozad Public Schools.

The system will require installation of an omni-directional antenna at the High School, with directional antennas at the Elementary Schools, the Wilson Library, and the Cozad Center. The project will provide high-speed Internet access and allow data access between the remote sites. Design, configuration, and installation will be coordinated by Educational Service Unit 10 and assisted by participating entities and contractors.

**Staff and Reviewer Comments:**

The project is based on many, many assumptions. It is probably worth a try because the cost is not high. The technology itself is struggling to achieve standardization which is probably 5 years out. Microwave transmission is a complicated game to play for the uninitiated.

**Project:** Dundy County Hospital Creation and Implementation of an Enterprise Intranet

**Applicant:** Dundy County Hospital

**Funds Requested:** \$25,000.00

**Score:** 47

**Executive Summary:**

Dundy County Hospital is initiating an enterprise wide technology project and desires to venture into a process of leveraging information systems to enhance healthcare delivery and efficiently refine healthcare processes.

The present technology base is almost non-existent and present systems are archaic and/or inflexible. Replacing peer to peer systems and building an IT infrastructure to move into the 21<sup>st</sup> century is drastically needed for this rural healthcare organization. Formalizing and funding this technology initiative will impressively shape and enhance the delivery of care while reducing administrative costs.

**Staff and Reviewer Comments:**

Overall, this is a good proposal. More specificity and detail could have been provided.

**Project:** Internet Access for Children

**Applicant:** Scottsbluff Public Library

**Funds Requested:** \$5,529.80

**Score:** 46

**Executive Summary:**

Because of a lack of filtered Internet computers, the Scottsbluff Public Library, in accordance with its Internet Policy, does not allow Internet access to children under twelve years of age. With the aid of the Community Technology Fund, the library plans to purchase two personal computers and a Laser Jet printer for the children's department. Filtering software will be installed on these computers. Additionally, in order to insure more privacy for Internet users, privacy screens will be added to the eight Internet computers in the adult library. By doing this, the Scottsbluff Public Library will enhance the educational opportunities it offers to all its patrons, most especially children under the age of twelve.

**Staff and Reviewer Comments:**

This application is not a project--rather it is a request for new computers and equipment. Is relying on grant funding for computers a sustainable model? The privacy screens requested in this application are clearly outside the scope of the project – they seem like a throw in. The in-kind match seems overstated. Will adding two computers require 61 hours a week of a librarian's time and \$14,000 in heating and electricity?

**Project:** Scribner Community-Library Internet Project

**Applicant:** Scribner Public Library

**Funds Requested:** \$9,079.08

**Score:** 45

**Executive Summary:**

The Scribner Community-Library Internet Project would provide a larger more usable Internet center for the public library. At the current time only two computers are available for public Internet use. We frequently have people waiting in line to use computers and have to limit time. The project would allow for these two computers to be replaced, two card catalog computers to be replaced with card catalog and Internet computers and an additional Internet computer to be added to the genealogy section of the library.

The city offices currently have one computer connected to the Internet and employees must wait to use that computer. The project would also provide for two additional computers for the city, both with Internet access.

The third part of the project would be the development of web pages for the city, the library and for local businesses. All businesses in the community would be included on the city web page and individual web pages would be provided for businesses that have Internet access.

**Staff and Reviewer Comments:**

This application involves three separate projects. It is difficult to adequately address multiple projects in one application. More specificity and detail are needed.

**Project:** Crete On-line

**Applicant:** City of Crete

**Funds Requested:** \$34,667.00

**Score:** 45

**Executive Summary:**

The proposed Crete On-line project will utilize information technology to establish the most useful and easily accessible resource for anyone interested in obtaining information about local government, business, services, and community activities in Crete. The overall goals of Crete On-line is to enhance the responsiveness of city government, improve dissemination of information, heighten operational efficiency, encourage citizen participation, and enhance the community's competitive position in economic development efforts.

On-line 24/7 access to information and services will enable the citizens of Crete to become better informed and more involved in their community and encourage better communication between citizens and local government. The number of requests for general information, via telephone and personal visits, will decrease substantially allowing city staff more time for issues requiring one-on-one interaction. This project will serve to increase the quality of service the City is able to provide and decrease associated costs for staff, supplies, and postage.

The City of Crete will be working closely with the local media to nurture the sense of pride in the community. On-line posting of community-wide assets and accomplishments will help convey the small town character and quality of life issues that entice newcomers to live and work in our community, thus enhancing expansion, retention, recruitment, and relocation activities in the area.

The City of Crete is requesting \$34,667 from the Community Council of the Nebraska Information Technology Commission (NITC) for the proposed project. This request will cover a portion of the technology coordinator's salary and benefits, server, and ADSL with router and IP address.

**Staff and Reviewer Comments:**

Overall, this is a well-written application. The provision of government services via e-government is a laudable goal. However, the objectives could perhaps be reached with much less expense through the cooperation of different parties and by outsourcing the server.

**Project:** Fiber Optic Learning Center

**Applicant:** Valley County Economic Development Board

**Funds Requested:** \$46,000.00

**Score:** 44

**Executive Summary:**

The fiber optic learning center project can be described as a fiber-optic based, full-motion, interactive video connection to virtually anywhere in the world with a dial-up connection. Classes could be taken through Central Community College, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, University of Nebraska-Kearney and many other institutions. Businesses could have their employees attend seminars that are currently only available by driving a distance of 70 miles or more. The hospital could provide continuing education and a method of completing the Registered Nursing Program through BryanLGH for Licensed Practical Nurses. There is also a program for Certified Nurse Assistants to become Licensed Practical Nurses. Overall, this project would provide benefit to many sectors of the different communities by allowing continued education and workshop opportunities for residents.

**Staff and Reviewer Comments:**

There is clearly a need for additional continuing education options in this area. The goals of this project are laudable. Some areas of the application could have been addressed in more detail, including the compatibility of this system with other existing systems and other options available in the community.

**Project:** Hooper Consolidated Library System

**Applicant:** Hooper Public Library

**Funds Requested:** \$25,000.00

**Score:** 43

**Executive Summary:**

The city of Hooper, in partnership with the Hooper Library board is in the process of relocating their existing library in a remodeled and updated structure. The community has committed almost \$140,000 for the purchase and remodeling of the new structure. This move presents an opportunity to cooperate with the Hooper Elementary School (an elementary school in the Logan View Public school district). At the present time neither facility has an automated library system. The consolidated system will purchase and share a library automation system. Access to the resources of both facilities would be available from stations in each library, from the home, or on line from any other facility that has Internet access. The system would purchase one central server and place the database of resources online, saving several thousand dollars. This server would be operated by personnel at the elementary school who have been trained in its operation, again saving the public library the expense of hiring and training additional staff to operate this technology. Links to this database would also be placed on the Logan View Public School's web page.

This project would also upgrade the technology at each facility in a cost effective manner. Presently the public library has only one computer that allows Internet access using a dialup modem. Computers will be purchased to provide public access to the automated system and the Internet. The elementary school presently uses a 56kbps frame relay system, which provides marginal internet connectivity. Each facility will upgrade to DSL connectivity with a 512kbps bandwidth to communicate more efficiently. This project would allow the public library, with the additional space in the new facility, to implement a small network. This network would include a new desktop circulation computer, computers with access to both the automated information data bases and the internet, and a networked printer. This arrangement would provide after school hours for the elementary students to do research and homework projects. It would also provide the entire community with public high speed Internet access that presently is lacking in the community.

**Staff and Reviewer Comments:**

The proposed project has merit. More detail and specificity could have been provided in some sections.

**Project:** The Technologically Empowered Elected Official

**Applicant:** Lower Platte North Natural Resources District

**Funds Requested:** \$24,800.00

**Score:** 40

**Executive Summary:**

This project will propel the LPNNRD elected directors into a leadership role in promoting the use of technology to other city and county governments and rural constituents in the District. This will eventually empower all local governments and citizens in the District by giving access to vast quantities of invaluable natural resource information which will allow them to be more efficient and effective in solving natural resource-based problems and making decisions at the local level.

**Staff and Reviewer Comments:**

This project has merit but needs to be more fully developed.



**Project:** Nebraska City Strategic Technology Plan

**Applicant:** City of Nebraska City

**Funds Requested:** \$14,400.00

**Score:** 37

**Executive Summary:**

This plan is envisioned for a collaboration of the City Government, Otoe County Government, the Nebraska City School System, the Library System, the Hospital and Health Care facilities, the Chamber of Commerce, Businesses and the Economic Development Corporation, Social Service providers, Law Enforcement and Emergency Services, along with local Information Technology service providers and other interested citizens.

In about 1995, a small group of technology mavens organized a local IT forum (called Arbornet) and assisted the Morton-James Library to get “on-line” and to provide some public access to the World Wide Web. School programs have evolved to provide technology and access to the Internet for educational purposes.

What has not happened yet is an overall plan for the local area to become fully involved in a comprehensive level of electronic government, commerce, health and education with open and public high-speed access. This proposed project would include the development of a community wide “Strategic Technology Plan” and would include a set of Action Plans and Action Teams to implement the resultant recommendations. In this case community is used in its broadest terms to include county and regional organizations as partners as well as those directly within the City environs.

**Staff and Reviewer Comments:**

This application is for a planning project which is justified and should be encouraged. However, more detail is needed in most of the sections of the application. The Task Force could have either done more preliminary work to indicate broader support for the plan and grant, or additional effort could have gone into preparation of the application.

**Project:** Web Student/Volunteer Production Project (WSVPP)

**Applicant:** Nebraska Game & Parks Commission Lake McConaughy State Rec Area

**Funds Requested:** \$23,330.00

**Score:** 36

**Executive Summary:**

Lake McConaughy State Recreation Area, Visitor / Water Interpretive Center is in need of Technological Computer and Video Equipment. Through area schools, volunteering activities and local businesses, we will be allowed to do many projects related to the area and its natural resources. Through projects and activity workshops, these students / volunteers will be able to make education technological productions that will be shown over the agency web site and through everyday visitor center theater productions. This will also enable the visitor center to become uplinked with other public schools, colleges, libraries and other parks throughout the nation / world and connect to them to share our projects with the entire internet digital community. With each new participation group, size and variety of online collections and showable programs, our library of interagency resources will expand to more fully meet the online demands of the ever-growing technologically educated audience. We would also like to work with local businesses by having workshops showing them how to develop their own web sites. Currently, Lake McConaughy S.R.A. Visitor Center is in the process of starting its educational / interpretive programs, and the need to get this system up and running as soon as possible is imperative to be as beneficial, not only to the immediate area, but also the technological and natural resources, is as important as ever. Even though Ogallala is a relatively small rural community, the impacts of this system will definitely be felt digitally worldwide.

The Project needs a team of Laptop Computers, a Digital Recording Camera and a LCD Projector with Components. The computers and camera will allow the project users to team together to document their project activities and accomplishments and build educational programs that will allow them to share their work with our visitors, their peers and the world, while giving them something to be proud of. The projector will allow us to accomplish both on-site and portable presentations. We will not only be able to show the everyday public the programs they have produced, in the Big Mac Community Room at the Lake McConaughy S.R.A. Visitor Center, but also, we will be able to use the portable projector, allowing us to do educational / interpretive presentations at schools, with the public and other needed interagency presentations. With the many needs of this technology, we foresee that the project will fulfill many aspects needed to complete our new center.

**Staff and Reviewer Comments:**

The concept of tying natural resource education to technology training is a good idea. Both topics are important to Nebraska's future. However, the proposed project needs further development.

**Project:** Technological Computer Lab

**Applicant:** John A. Stahl Library--Westpoint

**Funds Requested:** \$21,543.20

**Score:** 31

**Executive Summary:**

This grant application includes a proposal for the development of a computer lab in the John A. Stahl Library. This computer lab would feature the latest in computer technology including a much faster and more efficient means of accessing the internet. Seven computers would all be networked to a printer. The computer lab would be available for both individual and group use. As an adjunct to the computer lab we also propose to publish the library's collection to the web.

**Staff and Reviewer Comments:**

This application consists of two separate projects. It is difficult to adequately address the specifics of multiple projects in one application.

**Project:** Community Computers

**Applicant:** Central City Public Library

**Funds Requested:** \$8,820.00

**Score:** 30

**Executive Summary:**

This project's intent is to replace inoperable computers, parts and outdated software that patrons and staff currently use. All the computers that are in need of replacement are three years or older. Six computers are located in our technology center, and the staff uses three. Our library has broadband access and we want to make the most of this feature with dependable equipment.

**Staff and Reviewer Comments:**

More detail should have been provided in many sections of the application. Also, replacement of computers should be considered an operational expense.

**Project:** McCool Junction Community Technology Connection

**Applicant:** McCool Junction Public School

**Funds Requested:** \$28,800.00

**Score:** 27

**Executive Summary:**

McCool Junction Public School and the Village of McCool Junction are governed by progressive persons who are interested in keeping pace with the world in the fast moving technical revolution. Our school has done a great job in providing our students with the basics in computers and multimedia. Selected high school students have been trained as tech assistants to assist the elementary students and teachers with computer technology. This spring these students will be offering training sessions to the community. Many persons in our community are now "catching the fever" from the students and are interested in learning more about computers and extending their knowledge in higher education fields. Our school and village would like to assist these people by providing a Long Distance Learning Station at the high school technology site. Members of the community would be able to monitor seminars and take higher education classes from this site as well as having access to computers. The students of McCool Junction Public School would be provided with the opportunity to take classes that are not offered at our physical site and they would also be able to take college classes while still attending our high school. The school would be willing to arrange after school hours to help benefit the community and students. The Long Distance Learning Station would benefit village employees, volunteer firefighters, first responders, community members, students and teachers at McCool Junction Public School.

The village office of McCool Junction does not have internet capabilities in their office location. The school is willing to provide a room with an internet connection, maintenance of equipment as well as technical support for the Learning Station. School personnel are willing to arrange "tech time" for village personnel, McCool Junction industrial personnel and patrons of McCool Junction to help promote higher education.

To achieve our goal the Village of McCool Junction and the McCool Junction Public School will need to establish a fiber optic line to the school (Dark Fiber Solutions Engineering and Design - Galaxy Cable), purchase a Cisco 2610 router, Cisco Layer 3 Switch and Power Play Distance Learning Classroom Equipment. Given the financial restraints that the \$1.00 mill levy will place upon our school system, obtaining this necessary equipment may not be feasible. Grant funding is imperative for our village and school system to advance forward on this beneficial community project.

**Staff and Reviewer Comments:**

Although the potential benefits of the project are great, that of connecting a small rural school and village to distance education, the overall written proposal lacks specific documentation regarding use, expected outcomes and need.

**Project:** South Central Nebraska Technology Enhancement Project

**Applicant:** City of Superior

**Funds Requested:** \$24,941.00

**Score:** 28

**Executive Summary:**

The partners in this project are the **Superior Public Library**, the **Nelson Public Library** and the **Business Development and Technology Center** in Superior.

The **Superior Public Library** will implement the next phase of their technology enhancement program begun two years ago with the addition of three computers available to the public with high speed (T-1) Internet access. In this phase, a website will be built for the library and the library's card catalog will be made available to the public through the Internet.

The **Nelson Public Library** will acquire computers for automation of their check-in/check-out system and their card catalog. Not only will these modernizations improve library services for area residents, the proposed enhancements will also position this important service provider in the center of the county with the ability to qualify for accreditation with the Nebraska Library Commission, a status which will give it access to many other enhancement opportunities it does not have currently, as well as providing the county's two libraries with the ability to share resources.

Since opening in October, 2000, the **Business Development and Technology Center** in Superior has acquired both the hardware and software necessary to afford significant upgrades for the area's workforce and business community. What is needed now is a comprehensive Marketing Plan, with marketing materials and a methodical advertising regime to inform area residents of the opportunities available to them and why they should take advantage of these opportunities.

**Staff and Reviewer Comments:**

This application includes two separate projects. It is often hard for applicants to adequately address more than one project. It is better to submit two separate applications. Although both projects are worthwhile, more information is needed. Each question on the application form should have been answered directly.